

REMARKS

Claims 1-13 were pending in the above-captioned application when the present Office Action was mailed (June 20, 2006). Claim 1 has been amended to clarify certain aspects of this claims. Accordingly, claims 1-13 remain pending.

The status of the application in light of the June 20 Office Action is as follows:

(A) Claims 1-9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 1,164,967 to Thorp ("Thorp"); and

(B) Claims 10-13 were allowed.

The undersigned attorney wishes to thank the Examiner for engaging in a telephone conference on July 27, 2006 to discuss the present Office Action, the Thorp reference, and the pending claims. Applicants request that this paper constitute applicants' interview summary. If the Examiner notices any deficiencies with this paper in this regard, he is encouraged to contact the undersigned attorney to correct such deficiencies.

The following remarks summarize and expand upon the results of the interview, and they also reflect the agreements reached between the undersigned attorney and the Examiner during the telephone conference. For example, the following remarks reflect the Examiner's acknowledgement that amending claim 1 to clarify that the brake inhibits motion of the gripper relative to the launch carriage would distinguish the claim over Thorp. Claim 1 has been so amended and, accordingly, the Section 102 rejection of claim 1 should be withdrawn.

A. Response to the Section 102 Rejection of Claims 1-9

Claims 1-9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Thorp. As stated above, the Examiner acknowledged during the July 27 telephone conference that Thorp cannot support a Section 102 rejection of amended independent claim 1. Therefore, the rejection of this claim should be withdrawn.

Claims 2-9 depend from claim 1. Accordingly, the Section 102 rejections of these claims should be withdrawn for the foregoing reasons and for the additional features of these dependent claims.

B. Allowable Claims

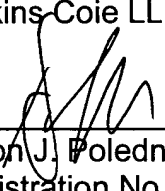
The applicants thank the Examiner for allowing claims 10-13. Although the undersigned attorney agrees with the Examiner's conclusion that claims 10-13 are allowable, the undersigned attorney notes that these claims may be allowable for reasons other than those identified by the Examiner and does not concede that the Examiner's characterization of the terms of the claims and the prior art are correct.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, the pending claims comply with 35 U.S.C. § 112 and are patentable over the applied art. The applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the application and a mailing of a Notice of Allowance. If the Examiner has any questions or believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is encouraged to call the undersigned at (206) 359-3982.

Respectfully submitted,

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